

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

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TAGS: EAID, EWWT, ML, US

SUBJ: AID-DONATED BARGE ENGINES START OPERATIONS ON RIVER NIGER

1. WITH GALA CEREMONY SUNDAY, SEPT 15, MALI NAVIGATION COMPANY (MNC) CELEBRATED INSTALLATION FOUR AID-DONATED DIESEL ENGINES IN TWO NIGER RIVER TUGBOATS WHICH THE SAME DAY BEGAN PULLING GRAIN BARGES CONTAINING 1000 METRIC TONS TO THE DROUGHT-STRICKEN NORTH. THE DONATION AND INSTALLATION OF THE 230-HORSEPOWER JOHNSON AND TOWERS ENGINES ARE PART OF A \$500,000 AID PROJECT DESIGNED TO ACCELERATE TRANSPORT OF DROUGHT-RELIEF SUPPLIES DURING FIVE-MONTH LONG HIGH-WATER SHIPPING SEASON.

2. MNC DIRECTOR GENERAL SALIF KONAKE INVITED MORE THAN FIFTY PERSONS TO INAUGURAL CEREMONIES, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF MINISTRY DEFENSE (WHICH COORDINATES DROUGHT RELIEF), MINISTRY OF STATE ENTERPRISES (OF WHICH THE MNC IS ONE), AND REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, UNITED STATES WAS REPRESENTED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES THOR KUNIHOLM, AID FOOD FOR PEACE OFFICER ROBERT ROUSSEL, VISTING STATE-AID LIAISON OFFICER EDWIN SEGALL AND OTHER MEMBERS U.S. MISSION.

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3. HIGHLIGHTING THE SMOOTHLY COORDINATED CEREMONIES

WAS HOUR-LONG CRUISE (ACTUALLY A RACE BETWEEN THE TWO BOATS) ON THE NIGER TO DEMONSTRATE SUPERIOR POWER, SPEED AND MANEUVERABILITY OF THE VESSELS. GUESTS THEN ADJOURNED TO THE LOUNGE OF THE PASSENGER CRUISE SHIP GENERAL SOUMARE WHERE KONAKE AND CAPTAIN SEGOU DOUMBIA, MILITARY COMMANDER OF THE DISTRICT OF BAMAKO AND PRESIDENT OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DROUGHT COORDINATION COMMITTEE, EXPRESSED THEIR APPRECIATION TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, THE EMBASSY, AND AID FOR THEIR GENEROUS ASSISTANCE. SPECIAL MENTION WAS MADE OF THE DEDICATION OF FORMER AID R&R OFFICER JAMES KELLY AND CHARLES RUST, MARINE ENGINEER FROM NEW JERSEY WHO ARRIVED IN MID-JULY TO SUPERVISE THE REMOVAL OF THE 1935-VINTAGE FRENCH ENGINES AND THE INSTALLATION OF THE NEW.

4. AS WAS NOTED DURING THE FORMAL REMARKS, THE TUGBOATS' DOWNSTREAM SPEED WAS INCREASED FROM 7.5 KILOMETERS PER HOUR TO 14.5 KILOMETERS PER HOUR, WHILE THE BARGE PAYLOAD GREW FROM 800 TO 1,400 TONS. THE GREATER SPEED AND CARGO CAPACITY, ACCORDING TO KONAKE, WILL ALLOW THE MNC TO TRANSPORT 15,000 MORE TONS PER SEASON.

5. THE INSTALLATION OF THE DIESEL ENGINES ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE MEDIA ATTENTION DURING THE FINAL WEEK LEADING UP TO THE "MAIDEN VOYAGE." MALI'S OFFICIAL DAILY "L'ESSOR" TWICE GAVE FRONT-PAGE TREATMENT TO THE STORY BEFORE THE INAUGURATION AND A LENGTHY ARTICLE AND ACCOMPANYING PHOTOGRAPH TWO DAYS LATER. OFFICIAL RADIO MALI ALSO COVERED THE EVENT.
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